EXCURSION BOATS

IDLEWILD

Sternwheel packet-steel hull, built in Pittsburgh, PA, by James Rees and Sons Co., 1914. 157.5' x 36' x 5'. Rees engine, 16's- 6 1/2'. Three boilers. Built for the West Memphis Packet Co. and departed Pittsburgh on Saturday, January 9, 1915, on her trip to Memphis. She served variously as packet, excursion boat, and ferry. Sold to the New St. Louis & Calhoun County Packet Co., Hardin, IL, in February, 1928. They sold her in April, 1947, to J. Herod Gorsage, Peoria, IL, who renamed her AVALON in February, 1948.

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AVALON

Sternwheel excursion, steel hull, the IDLEWILD built in 1915 was renamed in February 1948 by J. Herod Gorsage, Peoria, IL, to grant the death-bed wish of Captain Ben Winters, who had first worked on the former AVALON. Sold in 1950 to Steamer Avalon, Inc., based in Cincinnati. Operated excursions on the Mississippi, Ohio, Missouri, until sold at Cincinnati in 1962. Renamed BELLE of LOUISVILLE. As AVALON she had several minor accidents. In 1961 she became celebrated taking a boat load of Girl Scouts Memphis to New Orleans, during which Captain Ernest E. Wagner and first mate Clarke Hawley were joined up as official Girl Scouts.

LEFT: AVALON with excursion party passing Davenport, IA, 1950's.